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INTRODUCTION TO THE  
STUDY OF  
RUSSIAN HISTORY

BY

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CENSOR OF FITZWILLIAM HALL, CAMBRIDGE

LONDON

SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING  
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE  
NEW YORK: THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1920

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# INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF RUSSIAN HISTORY

## INTRODUCTORY

**RUSSIAN HISTORY** may have many meanings, for during the past thousand years there have been many Russias. To name but four: The "Russia" of A.D. 920, newly Christianized, meant the region round Kiev, inhabited by Slavs and ruled over by the Scandinavian House of Rurik. In 1420 "Russia" had Moscow for her centre and the Tartars for her overlords, while her inhabitants were a new and hybrid race of Slavs and Finns. Kiev, though still the object of their reverence, lay far beyond their frontier. In 1820 Alexander I., succeeding to the "great" Tsars Peter and Catherine, ruled over an imperial Russia which included half Europe and a still greater area in Asia. And to-day the birth or resurrection of Finland, Esthonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and the Ukraine forces "Russia" to signify the Muscovite family struggling for self-expression.

In the strangeness of her expansions, contractions, and transformations, historic Russia is perhaps unique. But her past, like the past of

other States, offers material for "history" of widely different contents—histories occupied with matters unknown or even unintelligible to the respective writers. A student of Russian history may confine himself to the foreign transactions of the Russian State, or to the formation and organization of the Russian Empire, or to the economic development of the Russian people, or to the evolution of the Russian Church, or to the Russian achievement in painting, music, literature, and the other arts, or to a hundred diverse studies. Each must choose his field for himself, and where the goal is so wide it is almost impossible that his effort should entirely fail of success. Indeed, one great charm of Russian history is its as yet undetermined character. In attempting to trace its course the student has but seldom to follow a well-beaten track from which to deviate is folly. Nor, if he is determined at all costs to be original, is he tempted to such adventures as proving John Lackland a saint or George Washington a liar. In the study of history, as in other fields, it may be maintained that "he who has tasted of Russian intellectual food does not wish to return to the old associations."

One caution may, however, be offered to the student who approaches Russia for the first time. Do not, at first, be too methodical. A short and prescribed course in Russian history is alien to the very genius of Russia, which is one of irregular but omnivorous enthusiasm. Read

ardently whatever interests you, assured that by frankness and sincerity in your study and your writings you will best approach and best repay a people singularly frank and sincere.

### § 1.—OUTLINES

In broadest outline, the history of the Russian people may be said to have been formed by the following factors. First, the original tribe, a Slavonic race dwelling somewhere north of the Carpathians and sharing in the language, institutions, and temperament common to the Slavs. Secondly, the region, the vast open country drained by the Dnieper and the Volga, subject everywhere to painful extremes of heat and cold, but sharply divided into the forest zone of the middle north and the open, treeless steppes of the south. Thirdly, the neighbouring races, infinitely various, but almost always hostile. Fourthly, the two supreme institutions—the Church and the Tsardom—which created and steered the Russian State. Fifthly, the social classes developed by the political, economic and educational forces of the past two centuries, which have broken up the familiar Empire of the Tsars.

Chronologically, the salient points in the narrative are as follows. The teeming Slavs move towards the Dnieper, which they have reached by the seventh century after Christ. On that



great highway between the Baltic and the Black Sea they form trading towns, struggle with the neighbouring tribes, spread northward, notably to Novgorod the Great on Lake Ilmen, and even threaten Constantinople. In the main, however, they are a pacific race, superior in culture to their northern and eastern neighbours, and terrible chiefly on account of their incessant multiplication and instinctive cohesiveness. They prefer the arts of the hunter, trapper, bee-keeper, and trader to agriculture, and the most lucrative and famous of their exports are slaves. They avail themselves of hired guards from the north, and in 862, according to tradition, the Scandinavian Variags under Rurik establish a lordship over Novgorod which is later extended to all the Russian lands. In 988 the princely house thus founded makes the Russians Christians. The new faith comes to Kiev, the capital, from Constantinople, and the influence of Constantinople, until 1453 the seat of the Eastern Empire, has incalculably affected all Russian history.

During perhaps a century from their official baptism the Russians, a race notably free, enjoy a high esteem and promise great things. But swiftly disintegrating tendencies, due to the unchecked rivalry of their princes, render the nation impotent save during the temporary ascendancy of some notable warrior. The breeding and spreading of the race continue; in 1176 we hear of Moscow, a military outpost, and in 1199 Galicia is conquered;

but though there are many Russian principalities, there is no solid Russian State. About the year 1240 attacks come from three sides at once. The racial hero and saint, Prince Alexander Nevsky, beats off the Swedes and the Germans, but the struggle against the nomadic hordes of the Tartars is unequal beyond hope. Russia shields Europe with her body, but to 1480 she remains in servitude.

The results of the long eclipse of Russia were manifold and abiding. The national character and institutions undoubtedly suffered, though to what extent is still the subject of controversy. Many of the western Russian lands, Kiev included, passed under the dominion of foreign Powers, notably of Lithuania. The union of Lithuania with Poland in 1386 exposed those of their inhabitants who belonged to the Eastern or Greek confession, to the Latin or Roman propaganda of the Poles, and thus sowed a seed of strife which was destined to blossom for centuries. In 1439 the Council of Florence attempted to oppose to the onslaught of the Turks a union of the two confessions. Thus originated the Uniates in the lost Russian lands—Greek Catholics who maintained their traditional rites but acknowledged the supremacy of the Pope.

The chief result of the Tartar dominion, however, was undoubtedly the rise of Moscow. Many causes—not least the patient, sordid policy of her princes—combined to render Muscovy the

Brandenburg or the Savoy of Russia. All the misfortunes of other Russian principalities seemed to tend to her advantage. When the Tartar dominion collapsed there emerged a new Russia, peopled by the mingled race of Slavs and Finns which had grown up in the zone of tangled forests in the heart of which Moscow lies. The dwellers in this new State were on the way to ecclesiastical as well as political independence, but also to that servitude towards their ruling house from which Old Russia had notably been free.

The prince of Moscow who was destined to point the way towards the future Tsardom was Ivan III. (1462-1505). From his time dates the pride of the Russian nation. His intermarriage in 1472 with the deposed dynasty of Constantinople hinted at the secular enmity with the new Turkish lords of the steppe, at the prospect of a new intimacy with the west, and also at the nascent claim of Moscow to be the second Constantinople and the third imperial Rome. The year 1478 witnessed the downfall of Novgorod the Great, while in 1480 the Tartar dominion was rejected. Ivan's son Basil continued the unsparing use of force against all rivals, and in a few years the long roll of Muscovite incorporations included Pskov and Smolensk.

In 1588, while still an infant, the prince known to history as Ivan the Terrible began his epoch-making reign. Before his death in 1584 he had

assumed the title of Cæsar (Tsar), widened his dominions by subduing Kazan, Astrakhan, and Siberia, and involved them in a terrible and unsuccessful struggle for the Baltic shore. He was a learned man, but many of his deeds—notably the slaughter of his son—suggest lunacy. With the chance descent of Challoner's expedition on Archangel the veil which had hidden Muscovy from the West was torn asunder, and Ivan was nicknamed by his subjects "the English Tsar." His wooing of Elizabeth is notorious, but the Queen went no farther than to promise him shelter in England, at his own expense, if he should be forced to flee his country.

During the reign of the Terrible, changes had taken place in the neighbouring States which were ominous for the welfare of the Russian people. The Teutonic Order, an association of Germans for exploiting the Baltic Provinces, had collapsed, though the individual Germans continued as before. In Sweden a strong monarchy, in Poland a stronger, had grown up, and both desired the overlordship of the Baltic shore and at times the throne of Moscow itself. Hence arose endless wars, and war cost the Russians their liberty. The menaced Tsars must dispose of their lives and fortunes, and the consequent ascription to the soil developed in two centuries into widespread slavery.

With Ivan's successor Theodore (1584–1598) the House of Rurik came to an end at the same

time that, with the consent of the whole Eastern Church, Moscow became the seat of an independent Patriarch (1589). There followed under Boris Godunov and others fifteen years of disputed succession and invasion, the so-called Time of Troubles. Russia was rescued from a foreign yoke by the uprising of her sons, led by her Church, and in 1618 a young noble, Michael Romanov, was elected Tsar.

Michael and his son and grandson ruled during the seventy years which precede the advent of Peter the Great upon the throne. The recurring wars with Sweden and Poland during this period were of less moment than the career of the Patriarch Nikon, whose reforms, mainly the correction of certain errors in the service-books, brought about the revolt of the Old Believers. These men, numbered by millions and prosperous beyond their fellows, have steadfastly refused to depart from the accustomed usages, which they still schismatically maintain. During the second half of the seventeenth century the question of Little Russia and the Cossacks also assumed great prominence. The oppression by the Poles of the free borderers, known as Cossacks of the Dnieper, resulted in 1654 in their union with Russia, but in further internal and external strife. As the Turkish power waned, the steppe became more fit for colonization, and the potential importance of the Ukraine (*i.e.*, borderland) or Little Russia increased. Its inhabitants differ in racial admixture from the

Muscovites or Great Russians. They have preserved ineradicable differences of temperament, of appearance, of social custom, and of speech. The efforts of the Tsardom to assimilate them to their northern neighbours by force have stimulated a separatist movement which is unfortunate for Great and Little Russians alike.

Under the early Romanovs the question whether Russia should enter the European circle or stand aloof still remained undecided. In spite of the traditional policy of isolation pursued by her Western neighbours and heartily reciprocated by the Russian Church, Western ways and Western men had filtered into the capital. It was reserved for Peter I.—“Great” in stature, in intellect, and above all in driving-power—to hurry his people forward so fast and so far that renewed seclusion became impossible. In his thirty-six years of rule (1689–1725) he made Russia a military and a naval power, painfully fought his way to the Baltic, founded a new capital upon its shores, made the administration and the social order Western, and even bridled the Church. For a space equal to that of his reign, his throne was occupied by a strange rabble, but Russia could never quit Europe. In 1709 she had destroyed Charles XII. at Poltava; in 1762 she held Frederick the Great at her mercy and spared him; ten years later she was about to partition Poland and to triumph over the Turk. From 1762 to 1796 Peter’s true heir appeared in the German

Princess Catherine, who also gained the title of "the Great."

Under both Peter and Catherine, however, the glory, expansion, and Westernization of the Russian State did not avert, but rather caused, the servitude and impoverishment of the Russian mass. The problem of the nineteenth century was created in the eighteenth—a Government half foreign compelled to enslave the mass of the people in order to secure its own continuance and the means of carrying out a policy which was seldom theirs. In 1778 the opposition into which they were occasionally goaded found expression in the career of Pugachev, a Cossack who pretended to be the murdered husband of Catherine and menaced Moscow with the forces of discontent. As often in Russian history, unsuccessful rebellion extinguished the liberal aspirations of the Tsar. The short reign of Catherine's son Paul (1796–1801) showed anew the dangers of autocracy uncontrolled. Mounting the throne with the design of reversing all that his mother had done, Paul merely committed Russia to a reign of terror and to wild contradictions in foreign policy. The warlike exploits of Suvorov were accomplished in combating France. Soon the Tsar was challenging George III. to a duel and despatching Cossacks to conquer India. His murder opened the way for the dignified and laborious monarchs of the nineteenth century.

Of these Alexander I. (1801–1825) most notably

charmed his contemporaries, gained glory and new dominions, and disappointed posterity. Finland, in personal union with Russia under the Tsar as Grand Duke, Poland, in a like union under the Tsar as King, Transcaucasia and Bessarabia were won by the monarch whom his Court knew as "the Angel" and his subjects as "the Blessed." The overthrow of Napoleon in Russia (1812) and the part played by the Tsar in the liberation and reconstruction of Europe (1813-1815) inaugurated a period of Russian predominance on the Continent which endured for forty years. Unhappily, although Alexander was liberal-minded and his successor benevolent, the nature and basis of the Tsardom made it impossible to govern save by force. The Tsars stood for autocracy at home and abroad. Gradually, therefore, liberal Europe was driven to oppose them, even when their policy would have emancipated Balkan Christians from a deeper servitude. The belief that Russia intended the subjugation of both Europe and Asia was deeply rooted in English minds during the remainder of the nineteenth century. At the same time the triumph over Napoleon and the twelve nations that shared in his invasion of Russia, the growth of an educated class, and the progress of historical research, gave many Russians a new sense of pride in their country, their language, and their religion, which was to ripen into nationalistic aggression.



From 1825 to 1855 Nicholas I., Alexander's younger brother, sternly repressed revolt within or without his frontiers. Himself German in blood, married to a Prussian princess, served by countless Germans from the regions which Peter and Catherine had annexed, Nicholas established what has been termed a Tataro-Prussian empire. All the world, it seemed, was clad in uniform borrowed from abroad, and every distinguished thinker was in exile or in gaol. The liberal elements in the army and in society, in Poland, Germany, and in the Austrian Empire, were successively put down by a monarchy which was conscious of its inability to solve its own peasant question. The Western Powers could check Russia only where her influence was the most beneficent—in the Near East. The Crimean War (1854) proved that the military system of Nicholas was rotten, and brought the Tsar's prestige and his life to an end. The Peace of Paris (1856) effectively hemmed in Russia on the side of Europe.

Thus restrained, Russia might naturally resort to expansion eastwards and to internal reform. The new Tsar, Alexander II. (1855–1881), was at least well educated and well-meaning. Under him, though chiefly owing to the initiative of the Russians on the spot, vast regions in Asia were added to the Empire. In the Far East the valleys of the Amur and the Ussuri, Sakhalin, Caucasia, Bokhara, Khiva—these trophies raised

new hopes and new dangers, and combined with the stern repression of the Poles (1863) to deepen the suspicions of the West. Resolutely pacific, Alexander looked on while Prussia transformed Germany into the supreme military State of Europe (1864-1871), and he even allowed the Berlin Congress to reinstate the Turk.

To Russians, and indeed to the world at large, the main interest of Alexander's reign lies, however, in the internal reforms which filled its earlier years. Of these by far the greatest was Peasant Emancipation. The institution of Western legal procedure, the creation of *Zemstva*, or County Councils, and of a new organization for the towns, the replacement of long-service conscription by universal national service—all these are worthy to be named with the measure which won for Alexander the title of the Liberator. But the disillusionment was as great as the expectation. The peasants had dreamed for generations that one day the Tsar would give back the land to the people. They found themselves set free to buy it back on impossible conditions. The gradual impoverishment of the masses has formed one great thread of subsequent Russian history.

At the same time the Administration gave proof that it was fundamentally opposed to any real transference of power. Concessions were robbed of their value by the *chinovniki* (officials), who either carried them out to their own advantage or prevented them by indirect means from

being carried out at all. In despair, many young Russians turned to Nihilism or even terrorism, and in 1881 the Liberator was shattered by a bomb.

Of the following generation it must here suffice to say that thus far it appears to have been the logical sequel to what had gone before. The reigns of the herculean Alexander III. (1881-1894) and of the ineffective Nicholas II. (1894-1917) were mainly inspired by the reaction to which the crime of 1881 gave rise. The Jingo editor Katkov and the high-minded ecclesiastic Pobiedonostzev, the avowed and unflinching foe of democracy, inspired the policy of a homogeneous empire autocratically controlled. So long as war was avoided and the peasants remained loyal to the Tsar, this policy was possible. Railroads, telegraphs, and the army of millions made rebellion obsolete, and the irreconcilables turned to assassination and the general strike. But the struggle with Japan into which Russia blundered in 1904, and the tragedy of Bloody Sunday, gave the revolutionists their chance and sapped the faith of millions in the Tsar. A Constitution was granted by the Tsar and undermined by the bureaucracy, while Germany added to the exasperation of the educated Russians by her ruthless exploitation of their weakness due to the war. In 1914 the ferment in Russia had grown so great that her enemies may well have supposed her incapable of a national effort.

## § 2.—LANGUAGE

Antecedent to any advice as to the detailed study of Russian history stands the problem of the Russian language. Pre-war Russia borders upon half Europe and half Asia, and light upon her record may be expected from the annalists, historians, and critics of a score of neighbouring nations. Few of the human race, however, will ever comprehend at once the Finnish, Polish, Turkish, and Chinese tongues. In this brief essay even Swedish and Danish will be left out of account, though one foreign student of Russia learned Danish for the sake of a single book. But what of Russian?

The student of Russian history who acquiesces in his own ignorance of the Russian language has at least many eminent precedents on his side. He may, if his hours for study be but few, choose wisely if he devotes them all to what is generally intelligible in the West. We must not forget that many Russians have written and still write in languages which they would term "European," nor that, almost as a matter of course, notable Russian works are translated into German, French, and English. But in Russia herself the creation of a superb Russian literature, the growth of Russian national consciousness, and the spread of Russian education have already superannuated the use of foreign languages, notably French, as the medium of the educated minority. The greater

Russian histories may be translated: the lesser will never be; and no translation is entirely satisfactory. In no far distant future the investigator of Russian history who knows no Russian will be a conscious sciolist.

The student may for several other reasons be well advised to acquire at least some knowledge of the rudiments of the Russian language. There is here no such danger as exists in the case of French of a little knowledge deluding him into undue self-satisfaction. Although Russian belongs to the Indo-European family, it is seldom that either the shorter words, as in German, or the longer words, as in French, obviously resemble English. But even a little knowledge prevents the ordinary Russian forms—proper names, for example—from appearing as the meaningless and repulsive agglomerations that many Westerners esteem them. From the alphabet and the elementary grammar the gap is not a great one to the extraction, with the aid of a dictionary or a friendly scholar, of the meaning of some Russian authority upon one of those moot points which are always baffling the student. The help of a good teacher, of course, abridges labour and enhances pleasure; but if ability to read Russian be the sole end in view, it may certainly be attained by solitary study. And, however acquired, the Russian language affords a clue, slender but indispensable, to the central mystery of our study—the racial character of the Slavs. The differences of their

minds from ours—here more acute and sympathetic, there vaguer and less practical—are reflected inimitably in the structure and content of their speech, which is thus an historical “source” of the first value. Some idea of this aspect of our study may be obtained from a brief pamphlet by Dr. J. E. Harrison on *The Russian Verb* or from *The Russians and their Language*, an entertaining medley by Madame N. Jarintzov.

To those who resolve to study the Russian language, the conversational and commercial grammar by D. Bondar may be commended as eminently practical, and the scientific grammar by N. Forbes as eminently scholarly. Among readers, N. Forbes's *First Russian Book*, followed by others; A. P. Goudy and E. Bullough, *Sevastopol*, an ideal school-book; and Boyer and Speranski's incomparable work may be named. Of dictionaries from Russian into English, that of Alexandrov is the best, and the pocket volume of J. H. Freese may be found convenient. S. Th. Platonov has written an excellent history in easy Russian.

It would, however, be idle to expect the vast majority of English students of Russian history to be well versed in any foreign language. Those who know German can command one of the great languages of Russia, for many millions of Germans have been Russian subjects and many millions of Russians have learned German. In German, too, have appeared some of the greatest works

on Russian history, notably those of Th. Schiemann, beyond question the foremost authority on Russia during the first half of the nineteenth century. Without German the history of the Baltic Provinces is almost unattainable. Moreover, Russians appealing to Europe have sometimes written in German, as, for instance, the authors of the valuable composite work edited by Josef Melnik in 1905. The important volumes of Th. Masaryk, the first President of Czecho-Slovakia, further illustrate the value of German in this respect.

Many of the best native French works on the general history of Russia, happily, are translated into English. But an Englishman who did not read French would be deprived of many excellent monographs, such as those of L. Leger and Fr. Pierling, and of valuable sources, such as the Memoirs of Catherine the Great, and would even find himself constantly at a loss in reading translations from the Russian. It is perhaps unnecessary to remark that F. de Martens produced in French his gigantic work on Russian treaties, and that many Russians have written valuable but untranslated works in the same language.

### § 3.—METHOD

Most intending students of Russian history, whatever their conception of the study, will wish for a general textbook, or compendium of Russian annals in a moderate compass. Some, perhaps,

may regard the main function of these *Helps* as discharged by the giving of advice on this subject.

Of purely British textbooks the latest, by C. R. Beazley, N. Forbes, and G. A. Birkett, is probably the best. W. R. Morfill produced a somewhat capricious book with scholarly fragments here and there. R. N. Bain's *Slavonic Europe* comprises three and a half centuries of Polish and Russian history ending with 1796, and is a spirited compilation. It is supplemented for the nineteenth century by F. H. Skrine's *Expansion of Russia*, a judicious and important book which implicitly disposes of the fallacy that the colossal Russian Empire resulted from a well-concerted plan. The reprint of the articles from the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, entitled *Russia and the Balkan States*, forms a curt but valuable survey, which may well be used for rapid reference. So, too, may Baedeker's *Russia*, with its authoritative summaries, admirable maps, and detailed information regarding every considerable Russian town and monument. The fifth and later volumes of the *Cambridge Modern History* contain a survey of Russian history from 1462 of great value, although the standard set by J. B. Bury is not always maintained. S. E. Howe's *Thousand Years of Russian History* has the advantage of its author's familiarity with the country, but is hardly the work of an historian. As a comprehensive narrative by a learned historian of the first rank, A. Rambaud's *Histoire de la Russie*, which has



been translated, will not easily be surpassed. H. Moore's translation of A. R. Ephimenko's *Short History* displays the view of the past which has been taught in Russian schools. A. Kornilov's two volumes on the nineteenth century are important.

The main outlines of Russian history mastered, or in a fair way to being mastered, how should the student proceed? The key to his main objective, if not his main objective itself, lies in Russian psychology. This, the inner national character of the Russian people, is in part the consequence but in greater part the cause of that collective record which is termed Russian history. Their psychology has been examined and described; it has also revealed itself, incidentally, as Russia has run her course. Should the student first master the history, confident that by so doing he will gain intimacy with the people, or should he first study the people, confident that only thus can he rightly appreciate their history?

My own view is that to this weighty question no dogmatic answer can be given. The student's appetite should be the tutor's guide. The strange and varying fortunes of the Russian people and the unfathomable depths of their minds will excite different inquirers unequally, while an ardent disorder in the pursuit of truth is truly Russian. The advice feel keenly before attempting to know systematically may well be followed. Should the psychological study first attract, and contact with living Russians be impossible, a great wealth of

books treating of the subject, consciously or incidentally, lies at our disposal. In general, the British have been more uniformly successful than other foreigners in appreciating and portraying the Russians, while the most bitter judgments, apart from those of members of the Russian nation, have come from Germans, Poles, and Jews. The great works of Sir D. M. Wallace and A. Leroy-Beaulieu should first claim the reader, and of the latter the translation by a Russian in the United States contains critical notes which materially enhance its value. Two German works of the forties—those of J. G. Kohl and A. von Haxthausen—if accessible will amply repay the student, and there should be no difficulty in obtaining and in reading some of the admirable studies of Russia in recent times by Dr. E. J. Dillon, G. Drage, G. H. Perris, H. W. Williams, Sir B. Pares, Hon. M. Baring, and R. Reynolds. J. Mavor's *Economic History of Russia* contains, in wide compass and severe form, materials of great value for comprehending the Russian people. So also, on the ecclesiastical side, does an older work full of unconscious humour, W. Palmer's *Notes of a Visit to the Russian Church*. W. J. Birkbeck's volume on Palmer's correspondence with Khomiakov, and A. Riley's attractive and valuable collection of Birkbeck's essays and the like, give a sympathetic presentment of the modern Orthodox Church. The psychology of a nation, moreover, may well be studied in the lives of some

of its great men. For this Waliszewski's *Peter the Great*, a lurid work, and A. Maude's *Life of Tolstoy* may be found useful—the latter from its diffuse and artless character. Merejkovsky's *Peter and Alexis* is the work of a distinguished artist. As expressing a personality sharply contrasted with both Peter and Tolstoy the *Reflections of a Russian Statesman* (Pobiedonostzev) might well be read. A charming supplement, illuminating the Opposition, is P. Kropotkin's *Memoirs*.

I have named but a few of the innumerable British and American men and women with first-hand knowledge of Russia who have achieved publication, rarely, if ever, without disclosing something that an alert reader may turn to good account. Even where, as in the well-known writings of S. Graham, the resulting picture may not exactly depict reality, it should not fail to stimulate and to inform the cautious reader. And many books unknown to the ordinary bibliographies—for example, H. S. Edwards's *The Russians at Home and the Russians Abroad*—are storehouses of valuable fact. So, too, are the treatises written for our instruction by Russians, such as G. Alexinsky and Madame N. Jarintzov, the short but valuable sketches by Sir P. Vinogradov, and the collection entitled *Russian Realities* addressed to the Cambridge Summer Meeting in 1916 by men of letters who had come from Russia for that purpose.

It cannot be too often emphasized, however, that all these works contribute but little to our

comprehension of the overwhelming majority of the Russian race. The educated townsman, whom the traveller most often meets, is friendly and communicative to the utmost, yet remains to a Westerner largely incomprehensible. The Russian millions live in the country; they are unlettered; and, however kind of heart, they neither possess nor desire the qualities that make a good witness. "The life of the peasants," wrote Tolstoy, "is a foreign land to us—another hemisphere," and where the great Slav confesses failure we should be foolish to expect success. This limitation powerfully affects our estimate of the revelation of Russian psychology which is afforded by the native writers of modern times. That unique constellation, in which Gogol, Turgenev, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy are for us the brightest stars, illuminates Slavdom beyond all other lights. The Russian novel may well be both the forerunner and the handmaid of our study, and at an early stage the student should enjoy the work of the Vicomte E. M. de Vogüé which is so entitled.

#### § 4.—PERIODS

Russian history is commonly divided into five periods—pre-Christian, pre-Tartar, Tartar, pre-Petrine, and modern. The student who should specialize in any of the first four would pass swiftly beyond the scope of these *Helps*, inasmuch as he would need several languages. All that can

here be attempted is to name several books in English which may supplement the selected textbook in his preparation for studying the age which Peter ushered in.

The foremost modern Russian historian is V. O. Kluchevsky, whose work has been in great part translated by D. G. Hogarth, and summarized by J. Mavor in his *Economic History of Russia*. Though difficult and by no means final, it marks a great advance on its native predecessors in scientific method and constructive power. No one should pass over the collection of annals known as the Chronicle of Nestor or the popular legends called *bylinas* and *skazkas*. Here the works of W. R. S. Ralston are classic.

For the period of Tartar domination J. Curtin may be of service. In the century which followed its close (*circa* 1480) Russia was rediscovered by English travellers, some of whose narratives have been published by the Hakluyt Society in E. A. Bond's *Russia at the Close of the Sixteenth Century*. R. N. Bain has treated of *The First Romanovs*, and W. Palmer's *The Patriarch and the Tsar* comprises documents of the trial and condemnation of the Patriarch Nikon. These books at least illuminate some aspects of the misty and difficult centuries which preceded Peter the Great.

With the advent of Peter, as all historians agree, a new period of Russian history began. Many question the beneficence of his reign; none, its importance. Second to his accession in 1689

as a landmark comes 1762, when Peter III. suffered Prussia to escape destruction, and Catherine arose to continue the work of Peter the Great. The fact and the form of Russia's triumph over Napoleon determined her fate in the nineteenth century. Half a century later, with the Liberation of 1862, her great hour struck, but the revolutions of 1905 and 1917 were the inevitable sequel. There are thus at least seven distinct chapters in the post-Petrine history. Their elucidation is rendered more difficult by the restrictions upon historical writing imposed by the Russian State. Even the most loyal native school-book trembles away into silence with or soon after the death of Alexander II.

For the reign of Peter the Great, in addition to Waliszewski, the student might well read O. Browning's book, which is based on Brückner and Schuyler. The latter wrote in English. Good monographs for the eighteenth century are rare. R. N. Bain's *The Pupils of Peter the Great* and *Peter the Third*, and E. A. Brayley-Hodgetts's *The Life of Catherine the Great* may be mentioned, while Waliszewski's *The Romance of an Empress* is unforgettable. The masterly translation by J. D. Duff of Aksakov's *A Russian Gentleman* convinces the reader that he is breathing the very atmosphere of rural Russia in the later eighteenth century. Those who have access to a few favoured libraries may find the despatches of the English Ministers in Russia among the Collections of the Russian Imperial Historical Society.

The first sixty years of the nineteenth century have evoked comparatively little British or American production in the field of Russian history. This is hardly surprising when the difficulties, natural and artificial, of intercourse are borne in mind. It is only as the century develops that steam abridges distance, that the seclusion enforced by Nicholas I. (1825-1855) becomes relaxed, that the collision between the British and Russian Empires in Asia threatens to be violent, and that the display of Russian genius in literature gains for the Russian nation a new status in the world. Wars, of course, occasion contemporary narratives and later histories, while Russia remained sufficiently remote and enthralling to encourage the publication of travellers' tales about her. So we have, for the reign of Alexander I., Sir R. Wilson's *Narrative . . . of the Events of 1812*; Dr. R. Lee's *The Last Days of Alexander I.* (a brief diary); and C. Joyneville's *Life and Times of Alexander I.* (a popular record). These books may now be difficult to come by, but H. B. George's *Napoleon's Invasion of Russia* is a recent work, almost entirely military and based on Western languages only, but scientific and valuable. With these must be named Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, an historical novel of immense potential service to the student.

The mystery in which Nicholas I. wrapped himself, his Government, and Russia provoked secret histories and "revelations" as inevitably as did the licence of Catherine and her circle.

Most books of this type prove ephemeral, and in the case of Russia the collapse of the Tsardom must reduce the interest of the reader in the Tsars. E. A. Brayley-Hodgetts, in his two volumes on *The Court of Russia in the Nineteenth Century*, has fulfilled his main object by producing a readable book which is not worthless. It is only in quite recent years that a band of well-equipped English scholars, headed by Dr. E. J. Dillon, have produced books which serve as real contributions to contemporary Russian history. Some special interest, like that of Kennan in the Siberian convict system, has from time to time resulted in labours of value. The Great War produced a rich crop of interesting studies. Periodical publications such as the *Annual Register* and the *Russian Year-Book*, innumerable books of travel, articles in the press, notably *The Times*, and in magazines, constitute with those already mentioned an appreciable British contribution. For the mass of English readers, however, the most accessible and attractive source of modern Russian history consists in modern Russian literature.

### § 5.—LITERATURE

How far will Russian literature, in English translations, help the student of Russian history? Prior to the nineteenth century, as I think, very little, for a native Russian literature hardly existed. Some of its documents have already been mentioned, and for others the student may well consult Pro-



fessor L. Wiener's *Anthology*. But with the advent of the nineteenth century comes a band of great men who made the literature of their country one of the most splendid that the world has ever seen or can hope to see. The poets lose almost all their charm in translation, but many nations have reaped a rich harvest of delight from translated Russian prose. What here concerns us is the peculiar relation of this prose to Russian history. Since the Tsardom withheld from its ordinary subjects all share in the government of the State, their rising intellectual force found its natural outlet in literature, and also used literature, particularly the novel, for the veiled discussion of political affairs. Thus, although almost every writer of distinction suffered exile or other punishment from the State, they were able to publish what, rightly interpreted, amounts to the material for a spiritual history of their times. In his colossal *War and Peace* Tolstoy gives us not only this but the essence of the military and diplomatic history of the years 1805 to 1812, with not a little discussion of the philosophy of history. Gogol's *Dead Souls* depicts rural Russia in the later days of serfdom as vividly as his *Taras Bulba* the earlier Cossacks, and his play *The Inspector* the corrupt bureaucracy which, down to 1917, frustrated every attempt at reform. Goncharov's *Oblomov* has been accepted by Russians as a mirror truthfully reflecting the sloth and indecision which prevent the realization of their lofty idealism. Russia, from Petrograd to Siberia, and the mysterious

Russian soul, have been laid bare by Tolstoy, notably in *Anna Karenina* and *Resurrection*, and by Dostoevsky in the *House of the Dead* and other achievements in "the great literature of pity." The West European who will submit himself to the enthralling torture of his *Crime and Punishment* will perhaps draw nearer to the secret of the Slav than by any other single experience. He may turn for relief to the perfect art of Turgenev, his revelation of the Russian woman, and his reflection of the movement of his times. In the judgment of Prince Kropotkin, six of the novels—*Rudin*, *A Nobleman's Retreat*, *On the Eve*, *Fathers and Sons*, *Smoke*, and *Virgin Soil*—comprise the intellectual history of Russia from 1848 to 1876.

The succeeding forty years, to the first Russian Revolution, witnessed the rise of two masters—some would add a third, Korolenko—worthy to be named with the greatest. Chekhov and Gorky carry on, in a Russia widened by the growth of industry and education, the mission of "Art for life's sake" which had inspired their predecessors. It may safely be predicted that history will rank their dissections and flagellations among its most valuable sources. Andreev may stand for the decadent despair which inspires much recent verse and prose.

## § 6.—CONCLUSION

Finally, let me offer to my fellow-students an attempt to choose out some half-dozen volumes in English for a short course of reading, rightly

balanced in fact and generalization. Such an attempt involves endless hesitation and regret, and the result is hardly likely to commend itself to any other judge, but it may have its uses.

First, then, let Rambaud supply the view of the long sweep of Russian history by a foreigner splendid in knowledge, penetration, and power, whose bias is easily discernible and therefore not dangerous. For the latest years he may be supplemented by Harold Williams, who represents the brilliant band of Englishmen who have striven to know "Russia of the Russians," and to interpret her to us. Then, harking back to Peter the Great, let us contemplate the presentment by a Slav of Slavdom in its most tremendous incarnation. E. B. Lanin's—that is, E. J. Dillon's—*Russian Characteristics* is the brief of an *advocatus diaboli*, accepted by Russians as valid, and summarizing what they themselves say in moments of despair, and what is said about them without sympathy by uncomprehending Germans. The indictment may be refuted in person by Khomiakov in W. J. Birkbeck's book and by Prince Kropotkin in his *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*.

No one who has read these six will fail to see that they comprise neither rural Russia nor the great writers, and few will neglect to remedy the omission for themselves.

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